

## **Abraham Lincoln and His Family**

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Abraham Lincoln is often thought of almost as a demigod by the American people. It is easy to forget that he was just a man like everyone else, with a family that influenced him. It is understood that a family plays a very major part in influencing who a young person grows up to become. Abe's family, especially his stepmother, influenced his learning and reading habits and gave him a hunger for knowledge that lasted all his life. They helped him to grow into the man that emancipated the slaves and led America through the Civil War.

“Family offers the environment in which a person learns in early age and at the same time family is the first source of information. That's why it is very important that that source to be trusted and realistic,” according to a Web site entitled, *Family Influence on the Educational Process*. A family is what young children learn and develop from. Studies show that children with higher quality of child care are better able to read, think, and interact with the world around them. Lincoln was strongly influenced by his stepmother, who encouraged him to read and learn. This may have helped him develop into the great thinker and leader that he was.

The first step to understanding Lincoln is to understand who were his parents. Many historians argue over who his biological father really was. There are actually about 16 different individuals who some authors have outlandishly claimed to be his real father, some of whom are quite famous. These include: John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, and Patrick Henry. His real father was probably Thomas Lincoln who was a farmer and

carpenter. He did not have much schooling and never fully understood Abraham's desire to read and learn.

His birthmother was Nancy Hanks Lincoln. She and Thomas Lincoln had three children but one died. Nancy Lincoln was "loved and revered by all who knew her." She read the Bible to Abraham and his sister Sarah. Abraham loved her dearly and once said "all that I am or hope to become I owe to my angel mother." Unfortunately, she died on October 5, 1818, of milk sickness.

Thomas Lincoln soon married Sarah Bush. Sarah had three children of her own and the families soon moved in together. Sarah made the cabin into a real home for her children. Abraham and his new mother became very close. She once said that "Abe was the best boy I ever saw," and the two grew to love each other. She brought several books with her to the cabin and always encouraged Abe to read. She was able to persuade Thomas Lincoln to be more tolerant of Abe's reading habits, and always encouraged him to read. His stepmother was probably the strongest influence in Abe's life as a child.

His stepmother's influence showed as Abe went to school. As a child Abe was a very clever and studious boy. He read every book he could find from neighbors and libraries. His first two teachers taught in the "blab-school" method and Lincoln once said that "When I came of age I did not know much. . . I could read, write and cipher to the rule of three but that was all." Yet he always did very well and as one man who knew him said, "Abe beat all his masters and it was no use for him to try and learn any more from them."

In conclusion, a child's family has a big influence on the child as he or she grows. A family that encourages learning is more likely to produce children with a desire to

learn. Abraham Lincoln's family was like that, and he became a very learned man. His biggest influence within his family was his stepmother. She was the one who encouraged his learning and reading. Abe wrote one text to a teacher in school that exemplifies what his stepmother taught him: "Good boys who to their books apply, will all be great men by and by." [From *Comments on Abraham Lincoln's Paternity*, showcase.net <<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/Lincoln/father.htm>> (Oct. 10, 2006); Education in Moldova, *Family Influences on Educational Process*, <<http://www.educativ.info/edu/index.html>>; *Family Characteristics More Than Child Care Influences on Child Development*, Kansas City InfoZine <<http://www.infozine.com/news/stories/op/storiesView/sid/18149/>> (Oct.15, 2006); Rexford Newcomb, *In the Lincoln Country*; R. J. Norton, *Abraham Lincoln's Parents*, <<http://home.att.net/~rjnorton/Lincoln81.html>> (Oct. 12, 2006); and Alonzo Rothschild, *Lincoln, Master of Men*.]